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Guard shows airmen another view

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28th Bomb Wing Public Affairs



An Ellsworth Air Force Base B-1B waits for its turn to get a tank of gas from a Kansas Air National Guard KC-135. (Air Force photo by Airman Jennifer A. Johnson)



An Ellsworth Air Force Base B-1B pulls away from the refueling boom after filling up from a Kansas Air National Guard KC-135. (Air Force photo by Airman Jennifer A. Johnson)

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE, S.D. (ACCNS) -- Members of the Kansas Air National Guard say you can't top their job: Three officers take you to work and you lay on your stomach and pass gas. It doesn't get any better than that.

The "gas" Master Sgt. Jim Spurlock is talking about is JP-8. A 190th Air Refueling Wing in-flight refueling instructor, Spurlock and rest of his KC-135 crew took 15 airmen from Ellsworth on a recent flight with them -- airmen who normally only see their B-1B bombers from the ground.

"Being in the avionics backshop, I only get to see a small piece of the entire B-1B mission," said Airman 1st Class Michelle Fuentes, an avionics systems technician with the 28th Maintenance Squadron. "The flight made it possible for us to experience a different side of the Air Force."

Fuentes said the flight added another first to her list of experiences when she sat in the tanker's cockpit while it landed.

"All the communication that goes on between the pilots and the ground crew is truly amazing," she said. "I've gained a new respect for pilots. The way they're able to handle the plane and see through the clouds was amazing. I felt like I was a part of something special just by being up there to witness it."

Spurlock said he enjoys taking KC-135 first-timers for a ride.

"It's great to see the smile on people's faces when they see the refueling process," the sergeant said. "You get that extra energy and spark when you see someone else enjoy it for the first time."

Spurlock added that his job allows him to see smiles from many different places. "We get to travel all around the world," he said. "I've been to places I never thought I would go, such as Europe and Australia."

As Spurlock and his fellow guardsmen pass gas around the world they help keep Ellsworth's and the Air Force's missions going.

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